

CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASES AND HEALTH: PATIENT PERSPECTIVES

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Introduction. One of the greatest challenges to public health in Kazakhstan is the increasing prevalence of cardiovascular diseases (CVDs). Perceptions of responsibility in health vary across populations [1], and research in Kazakhstan has revealed that patients tend to place the responsibility for their health on doctors rather than on their own individual health choices [2]. Due to the relationship between lifestyle and many CVDs, this presents a problem for the future health of Kazakhstan's public. This study examined the perspectives of patients being treated for CVDs regarding their care and lifestyles in order to be able to inform patient education and behavior change efforts as well as improve larger public health promotion.

Materials and methods. We used semi-structured qualitative interviews for this study because of their appropriate fit for gaining the perspective of participants. We conducted 65 interviews with patients, both male and female of various ages and conditions, which were at the time hospitalized for cardiovascular diseases at nine of the major hospitals in Astana.

Results and discussion. Preliminary analysis of interview transcripts shows patients generally report they did not understand that their lifestyle would cause their current health problem prior to being diagnosed. Now that patients have been diagnosed and are receiving treatment, their main responsibility, they report, is to follow doctor's orders, particularly medications. The doctor's responsibility, according to most patients, is to cure the patient by administering correct medications.

Conclusions. Not understanding the role lifestyle and health choices play in preventing CVDs is explained by a lack of health knowledge, but it is also part of an overall perception of the relationship between health and health care. Patients, even after being diagnosed and demonstrating an understanding of their condition and cause, still construct health as a state achieved through medication as administered by doctors without acknowledgement of the importance of lifestyle and daily health behaviors. Patient education and health promotion for prevention must change the current perception from health being something that is achieved through medical care rather than through daily choices on the part of the public themselves.

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